

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and our Lord and Savior Jesus the Christ. Amen.

This Sunday marks the end for me of 32 years of full-time ministry and next Sunday marks the beginning of my 33 year of ministry. Soon I will be in the ministry as long as Jesus was alive. Scholars believe Jesus was 33 when he went to the cross. Jesus' actual ministry took place over a 3-year period, but those three years have borne fruit for over 2000 years and will do so until Jesus comes again. Jesus' life and ministry on the cross also covers and blesses the Old Testament saints. Jesus' blood covers their sins as much as it covers our sins. For three years Jesus did ministry that still ministers to us and will until the Lord Jesus takes us home.

1. Never underestimate the smallest steps of obedience unto God. Your obedience today has the possibility of bearing fruit long after you are in the grave. My immediate family said this to me a week ago. Dad, we want you to be our Dad and not our pastor. We want you to lead by example. In other words, they were saying to me, "Dad, we don't care how you preach." We want you to lead by example in our home.

Parents, our children are watching us from day one and throughout our lifetime. Yes, we are under their scrutiny. Your children may not attend church but the fact that you do is one way of being a consistent Christian witness to them and to your grandchildren. And when you attend a Bible study, the children know exactly what you are doing. You are showing love for Jesus and you are showing love for His word. Those of you who do not have children, you may have nieces and nephews that you dearly love, and they see your witness of Jesus. Your witness may even shine brighter than that of the parents. You just might be the most important Christian witness in their lives.

I have on my computer a picture of my Grandma Sophie. Grandma lived to 98; that is a long life. I mention her for this reason. I look at her several times a day because her picture is on my computer screen. Her smile is a million-dollar smile. Until my Grandma grew ill in her

90's, Grandma did everything she could to serve us. Grandma expected nothing from us in return, gave all that she had and never complained. Her cooking skills were out of this world. To this day I compare everything I eat to what she made. Grandma had 10 brothers and 2 sisters, and their mother died young in life. She raised her siblings. Please hear what I am about to say. She faithfully served all of us doing everything she possibly could. I was the only student at my seminary that brought their Grandmother to class with me. Her servant's heart did not end until her heart stopped beating. She remained faithful to God and to the church all of her 98 years. She served and served and served because her heart belonged to Jesus and God gave her the heart of a servant. I want to be like that. I want to serve to the end without complaining, whining, and being upset people don't do more for me. My biggest fear is becoming an old poop. I want to do more for others and expect nothing in return. That is the legacy of my Grandma Sophie. She died in 2002 but I still look up to her and look at her picture every day. Grandparents, no one can love your Grandchildren with the love of Jesus as you can. Your obedience today will impact future generations and don't you forget that ever. Grandparents I say you are more important than ever, especially in these days of darkness across our land.

Since my time here I lost both of my parents. Someone said to me in the last few months. Pastor it is time for you to get over the death of your parents. Friends, in all of these years of ministry I have learned that we all deal with grief differently. My dad has been gone for 15 years and I still miss him terribly. Mother struggled with Alzheimer's for 20 years and yes it was quite the painful process. My point is this. When a loved one dies, the grief from the loss remains; it does not go away. Yes, we mature and learn how to handle grief. The excruciating pain may be gone but it still rears its head from time to time. When someone shares their grief with you, even if it is the 100th time please do not tell them to get over it. It may not be interpreted the way you meant it and it just might be the cruelest thing you could ever say.

Your Christian witness and obedience today unto the Lord Jesus Christ will bear fruit long after you are gone. In 2000 BC, a man by the name of Abram said yes to God and faithfully obeyed his calling to go to the land that God would show him, the Promised Land. Abram, whose name was changed to Abraham, obeyed God's call immediately. The Bible says, "and Abram believed in God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness" (Genesis 15:6) Please listen. Four thousand years later we are still benefiting from Abraham's obedience unto God. Abraham's witness of God and personal obedience is still bearing fruit and will do so until Jesus comes again. Out of Abraham's obedience came the blessing of the birth of the Messiah, Jesus, who came to save us from our sins. It was promised to Abram, "that through him all the families of the earth will be blessed." Through the family line of Abram (Abraham) the Messiah would be born who would save us for all eternity.

Why is it a good idea for you to be obedient today when it is so easy to be disobedient and sin and even enjoy it? Here is my answer. Your obedience today will have repercussions for generations. Your disobedience can get an entire family line going in the wrong direction, away from the promises of God. Another reason it is good to be obedient unto God today is Jesus is worthy of your obedience. "Worthy is the lamb that was slain." Your obedience honors Christ. Your obedience will be felt by your great, great, grandchildren and more. Please never underestimate how your obedient actions unto God today will impact future generations. In my own sermons are principles I learned from my parents. My parents learned those Christian principles from others who learned those same principles back into the early 1800's before my relatives left Norway. Those principles go as far back as the Apostle Paul who brought to Christ the first European convert, Lydia, the seller of purple, down by the river.

One of the generational addictions in my family is alcoholism. Four of Grandma's brothers died from drink. It would be quite easy for me to become an alcoholic because it runs so strongly in the family. In all of these years of ministry I have seen alcoholics experience the

grace of God and they never took an alcoholic drink again. God has the power to break any addiction in our lives. God's grace is greater than our sin, greater than any addiction. Yes, some consider alcoholism a disease like getting the flu. I am here to tell you that God's grace is greater than the disease. God is more powerful than the bottle. It is called giving up an idol. The drink becomes a god and it takes over your life. Jesus has the ability to come in, clean the person out, and transform him or her into a brand-new person.

My biggest concern today is for young people. When I see youngsters outside in my neighborhood, I think, "I hope they know Jesus." Young people today have honest struggles and they need our love, wisdom, and help. So many of them are highly anxious. They have anxiety levels that can be crippling. They feel stressed to the max. For whatever reasons they need to learn basic coping skills for life that us older ones take for granted. My heart goes out to the young people. They need Jesus in their lives more than ever for it is only in knowing Jesus that they will be able to thrive. Jesus has everything that they need. It is up to us older ones to spend time with them so they can learn what God has for them. It is easy to sit back and think, "We need more young people in this church." My question is, when is the last time you spoke to a young person to encourage them in the faith. When is the last time you cared enough about a young person that you either prayed with him or her or told the young one that you are praying for him or her. If young people feel loved and accepted by you, by me they will come. Please don't whine that we do not have enough young people. Do something about it and get involved in a young person's life. Don't wait for someone else to do it for it won't get done. I know God can use you. Let us pray to that end.

Lord we pray that you would fill our hearts with the love of Jesus for young people. We want them to come to know Jesus and be saved for all eternity. Please open up the door for us to enter young people's lives and be a support and encouragement to them. Lord, you have the love, joy, and peace that they need and are looking for. Help us to love them with your

unconditional love, accepting them right where they are at with your grace and mercy. Lord we want this young generation won over to Christ. This we pray in the name of Jesus. Amen.

I am beginning my 33rd year of ministry enjoying the ministry more than ever. Part of me feels like I am just beginning. The Bible is the true word of God and we can never get enough of it. You are a wonderful group to serve. The best days for this church are in front of us. As long as we remain faithful to God and to the Scriptures, God's blessing will not leave us for God will lead us to do exactly what God wants us to do and be. What we do here now will make a huge impact on future generations. Please never forget that. Trusting and obeying God is always the best way. Amen and Amen.